



CATAWBA COUNTY

P.O. BOX 669 Newton, North Carolina 28658-0669 (828) 695-5600

Department of Social Services

Contact: Beth Clore at (828) 695-5723 or
eclore@catawbacountync.gov

Thursday, October 04, 2007

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month: Focus on Link Between Domestic Violence and Social Services

October is the month of national recognition and particular focus on issues of domestic violence. Catawba County DSS has been a leader in recognizing the impact of this problem on families and children, both in the arenas of Work First and Child Protective Services.

Catawba County developed and implemented a policy for dealing with domestic violence as part of Child Protective Services (CPS) in 2002, and the state has since developed and implemented such a policy. This policy specifically addresses issues of safety to children and victims, as well as accountability of the offending parents. While the primary function and responsibility of CPS is to protect the child and assure child safety, we do so best by providing safety to the non-offending parent and holding the offending parent accountable for the violent behavior.

In April 2007, CCDSS hosted a community dialog on child welfare and domestic violence. CCDSS presented training at the state Multiple Response Institute in August on working in child protective services with cases involving domestic violence and will present this training again at the DSS Institute this month.

CPS and Work First continue to partner with First Step, our local provider of services to address domestic violence, to offer services for safety for non-offending parents, children and their families. CPS and Work First are active on the Community Professional Response to Domestic Violence committee, which also includes domestic violence victim services, law enforcement, DA and district court judges, as well as other community partners.

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is the establishment of control and fear in an intimate relationship through the use of violence and other forms of abuse including but not limited to: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, economic oppression, isolation, threats, intimidation, and maltreatment of the children to control the non-offending parent/adult victim.

Facts on Children and Domestic Violence

- Domestic Violence may be the single major precursor to child abuse and neglect fatalities in the U.S
- Between 3.3 and 10 million children are exposed to domestic violence annually.

- Pregnant women are at twice the risk of domestic violence than women in relationships who are not pregnant.
- More than 50% of men who assault their wives/partners also abuse their children

Effects on Children of Domestic Violence

Children can be physically injured as a result of domestic violence. Although most parents believe their children are unaware of the domestic violence, between 80 to 90% of children report awareness. Even if children do not witness the violence, they hear the screams and see the injuries. Children who are exposed to domestic violence suffer a range of anxiety, depression, and difficulty in concentrating, and have may have problem behaviors, such as violence toward peers.

Why Doesn't She Leave?

Research indicates it may take up to 7 attempted separations before a woman needs a violent relationship. Women may stay in a violent relationship for many reasons: embarrassment, fear, love, economic dependency, concern for the children, religious beliefs, commitment to marriage, denial, low self-esteem, hope that things will change for the better. **Women are at the greatest risk of lethal violence when they leave.** As helping professionals, we need to be asking ourselves "Why doesn't he stop abusing her?"

How Can We Help?

- Report suspicions of child maltreatment to CPS (828-324-9111.)
- Provide information on how to contact First Step (828-322-1400.)
- Hold judgment when a person is telling you about experiencing domestic violence.